



**Suffolk County Department of Health Services Guidance
Resumption of High-Risk Sports and Activities
April 23, 2021**

Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) has approved the resumption of higher risk sports and recreational activities in the County effective February 1, 2021. The resumption of these activities does not mean that such activities are safe or without risk. Those participating in such activities should assess their individual situation when determining whether to participate. Those with underlying health conditions should consult with their medical provider. School Districts may also opt out from the resumption of higher risk sports and recreational activities. Further, SCDHS requires that the resumption of play follow the below guidelines in order to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Effective April 23, 2021, SCDHS recommends testing protocols for student athletes participating in high-risk sports. Based on the decreasing positivity rate for COVID-19 in Suffolk County, the increasing rate of vaccination, the eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine having been expanded to those 16 years of age and over, as well as the ability to practice and play outdoors, mandatory testing is no longer required. SCDHS recommends weekly testing and encourages athletic programs to develop opportunities for their student athletes 16 and over to #TAKEYOURSHOT and get the Pfizer vaccine. COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and free. For more information and to schedule an appointment at a Suffolk County Vaccination Facility, visit www.suffolkcountyny.gov/vaccine.

Guidelines for Safe Play

- Player Pledges. Make it clear that what your team members do outside of practice and games can affect their teammates, opponents and their community. Their actions can directly impact the future of the sports season. Encourage smart decisions during the season to help minimize exposures.
- All players and coaches should complete daily attestations confirming they have not experienced any COVID-19 symptoms and have not had any recent exposure to a COVID-19 case. It is critical to reducing the spread of COVID-19 that those experiencing symptoms stay home. This may involve a culture change for some teams – the message should not be to play through an illness, but to stay home to protect others.
- Temperatures of players and coaches should be taken prior to practices and games/contests.
- Masks should be worn whenever possible, but definitely when not engaged in play. Enforce social distancing when not engaged in play. Enforce mask wearing and social distancing of all individuals on site.
- Require hand washing or sanitizing of hands before and after practices and games, and after sharing equipment.
- Minimize equipment sharing. Players should bring their own equipment when possible; have individual water bottles, and no sharing of food. Eliminate any unnecessary physical contact among players and opponents (e.g., handshakes, high-fives).
- Maintain attendance logs of all who attend practices and games, including players, coaching and ancillary staff. Attendance logs should include contact information. If a COVID-19 exposure occurs, timely notifications are critical, and this information will help contact tracing activities occur quickly. **Operators, coaches, participants and others**

engaging in sports activities must cooperate with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services on contact tracing.

- Play in smart spaces. Always outdoors if possible. Use large and well-ventilated spaces for play.
- Consider dividing larger teams into smaller groups and stagger practices with different times or days. Limit those individuals not essential to the practice from attending, including but not limited to spectators, staff, vendors, etc.
- Consider creating pod/bubble leagues to minimize contact. For example, if twelve schools are in a league, have three mini leagues of four that only play one another. Participation in tournaments and out of Long Island region play is not recommended.
- Develop testing protocols for student athletes.
 - SCDHS **recommends** weekly testing for:
 - All high risk sports coaches
 - Competitive cheerleading student athletes
 - Boys/girls basketball
 - Wrestling
 - Boys/girls volleyball
 - Football
 - Contact lacrosse

The SCDHS will supply test kits to the School Districts. School and sports leagues can also consider developing partnerships with community-based providers for testing.

- Coaching staff should coordinate with the District or School's COVID-19 Representative or Coordinator when there is a known or suspected case of COVID-19. The district or school's policy for notification to the school community should be followed. Remember, the name of the individual with COVID-19 should never be disclosed. It is strongly recommended that anyone with close contact to a COVID-19 case during their infectious period (48 hours prior to symptom start date or test day if asymptomatic through the day they isolate) get tested.
- A process should be developed to communicate to coaching staff in a timely manner when a student is excluded from school for illness to ensure they do not attend practices or games. That process should also include communication when a student is cleared to return to school.

Additional Resources:

CDC Guidelines

Playing Sports: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/playing-sports.html#:~:text=Bring%20your%20own%20equipment%2C%20like,help%20protect%20yourself%20and%20others>

Considerations for Youth Sports Administrators: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

Sports Organizations

<https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/covid-19-coronavirus>

<https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/guidance-and-recommendations-game-day-operations-basketball>

<https://content.themat.com/covid-19/USAW-Return-to-the-Mat-Guidelines.pdf>

<https://www.usacheer.org/return-guidelines>